

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-10 IO-13 ISO-00 DOE-11 SOE-02
ACDA-12 OMB-01 TRSE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 HA-05 OPR-02 /127 W
-----001643 231733Z /41

P R 220445Z FEB 78
FM AMEMBASSY DJIBOUTI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 674
INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
AMEMBASSY LONDON
MOGADISCIO 122
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY NAIROBI
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY SANA
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI
USMISSION USUN NY
USMISSION NATO
USCINCEUR
CINCUSNAVEUR
CINCPAC
CINCPACFLT
COMIDEASTFOR
USS DAVIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L DJIBOUTI 218

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MOPS, MILI, PINS, ET, SO, DJ
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SUBJ: ETHIOPIAN FORCES RENEW ADVANCE

REF: DJIBOUTI 197

1. ETHIOPIAN ADVANCE SHOWS MARKED GAINS SINCE FIGHTING FLARED UP
AGAIN NIGHT OF 16 FEBRUARY. SOMALI FORCES HAVE DROPPED BACK FROM
HILLS NORTH AND EAST OF HARAR. ETHIOPIAN TROOPS NOW INSTALLED AT

HILL PASS WELL NORTH OF JIJIGA LOCATED NEAR 9°45'N AND 42°30'E. THIS POINT PROVIDES POSSIBILITY TO SEND FLANKING FORCE NORTH AND EAST OF JIJIGA, CUTTING OFF ESCAPE ROUTE FOR SOMALI FORCES THERE. AT SAME TIME, ETHIOPIAN UNITS ARE PREPARING ACTION THROUGH MOUNTAIN PASS (NEAR SHEBELE) ABOUT FIVE MILES SOUTH OF KARA-MARDA PASS WHICH REMAINS IN SOMALI CONTROL. FRENCH MILITARY SOURCES POINT OUT THAT KARA-MARDA PASS AND HILLS SURROUNDING IT ARE IDEAL FOR MODERN MECHANIZED WARFARE. HILLS ARE RELATIVELY FLAT, WITHOUT SHARP BREAKS IN TOPOGRAPHY WHICH WOULD PREVENT DIRECT PASSAGE OVER HILLS AND THROUGH VALLEYS BY TANKS AND ARTILLERY. BATTLE PLAN BEING DEVELOPED BY ETHIOPIANS APPEARS AIMED AT BOXING THE SOMALI DEFENDERS IN AT JIJIGA.

2. NO RECENT MOVEMENT TOWARD DJIBOUTI HAS BEEN IDENTIFIED ON RAILWAY. ETHIOPIAN FORCES LOCATED JUST NORTH OF ADIGALA HAVE BEEN HEAVILY REINFORCED. ONCE THIS GROUP HAS SKIRTED THE MOUNTAIN IN WHICH RAILWAY TUNNEL LOCATED, THERE IS NO NATURAL OBSTACLE ON RAILWAY LINE UNTIL AYSHA, WITHIN A FEW MILES OF DJIBOUTI FRONTIER.

3. A LARGE NUMBER OF SOMALI DVRAGGLERS FROM THE HARAR AREA HAVE RETREATED TO A LAKE LOCATED NEAR LANGE, APPROXIMATELY 9°26'N AND 41°48'E. THIS GROUP WILL EVIDENTLY ATTEMPT TO FILTER SOUTH TO REGAIN SOMALI-HELD TERRITORY. THIS IS LAST SOMALI GROUP OF ANY SIZE WHICH COULD OFFER ANY THREAT TO DIRE DAWA-ADDIS
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ABABA SECTION OF RAILWAY. THE FRENCH EXPLAIN THAT APPARENT REASON FOR RECENT SLOWDOWN IN ETHIOPIAN OFFENSIVE WAS DUE TO LATE RAINS IN NORTHERN OGADEN AREA WHICH CREATED SERIOUS LOGISTICAL PROBLEMS.

4. THE FRENCH INDICATE THAT BASED ON THEIR INTELLIGENCE THE SOVIETS ARE NOW DIRECTING ALL FACETS OF THE OGADEN CAMPAIGN. THEY CLAIM THAT THEY CAN IDENTIFY THE EXACT HOUSE IN DIRE DAWAN

BEING USED BY SOVIET HIGH COMMAND TO LEAD OFFENSIVE.

5. A NUMBER OF DESERTERS FROM BOTH SOMALI REGULAR AND IRREGULAR UNITS ARE NOW SHOWING UP IN DJIBOUTI. THEY ARE EASILY DISTINGUISHABLE BY THEIR SHORT HAIRCUTS AND FACT THAT MOST STILL WEARING PARTS OF THEIR SOMALI UNIFORMS. THE DJIBOUTI GOVERNMENT WAS REQUESTED ON CONFIDENTIAL BASIS BY SOMALI EMBASSY TO RETURN THESE DESERTERS. SO FAR, DJIBOUTIANS HAVE REFUSED TO COOPERATE IN ANY SUCH ENDEAVOR.
CLARKE

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